

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method for instant messaging on a computer system, including:
 - receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;
 - determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;
 - sending a request to a character server with said identification of said sender;
 - receiving from said character server an animated character associated with said sender;
 - displaying ~~an~~said animated character associated with said sender; and
 - delivering said content to a user through said animated character.
- 2-8. (Cancelled)
9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 further including:
 - periodically retrieving advertisement details from a server;
 - downloading an animated advertising character specified to represent said advertisement;
 - displaying said animated advertising character specified to represent said advertisement;
 - and
 - delivering content specified for said advertisement.
10. (Original) The method of claim 1, further including:
 - sending an alert to a server;
 - receiving a response containing content from said server generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) application;
 - displaying an animated character associated with said AI application;
 - and
 - delivering said content to a user through said animated character associated with said AI application.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said sending an alert includes:
sending a message indicating that a web search is to be performed; and sending keywords to search in said web search.
12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said delivering said content comprises delivering results of said web search.
13. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further including:
allowing the user~~sender~~ to select from one or more predefined animated characters to be displayed on a recipient's computer system when said user~~sender~~ sends an IM message to said recipient.
14. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further including:
allowing the user~~sender~~ to upload an image to be used in creating an animated character to be displayed on a recipient's computer system when said user~~sender~~ sends an IM message to said recipient.
15. (Currently amended) A method for instant messaging on a digital communication system such as a computer system or digital telephone system or combination thereof, including:
receiving one or more instant messages (IM) containing content from one or more senders;
forming a queue by creating a dynamic array and inserting incoming message into said queue;
determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;
sending a request to a character server with said identification of said sender;
receiving from said character server an animated character associated with said sender;
controlling the timing of operations of actions in the queue and when required displaying ~~an~~ one of said animated ~~character~~ characters associated with said sender; and
delivering said content to a user through said animated character.

16-18. (Cancelled)

19. (Currently amended) A method for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, including:
receiving a request in a character server from a user for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of an IM message to said user;
querying a database in said character server with said identification to identify an animated character associated with the sender;
receiving ~~information regarding~~ said animated character associated with the sender from said database;
and forwarding said ~~information regarding said animated character~~ from said character server to said user.

20-30. (Cancelled)

31. (Currently amended) An apparatus for instant messaging (IM) on a computer system, including:
an IM receiver;
a sender identification determiner coupled to said IM receiver, for determining the identity of sender any IM received;
a server request sender coupled to said sender identification determiner for forwarding the identity of a sender of an IM to a character server;
an animated character receiver for receiving an animated character from said character server, and
an animated character displayer coupled to said IM receiver and said animated character receiver;
and an animated character content deliverer coupled to said animated character displayer.

32-38. (Cancelled)

39. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, further including:

an advertisement details periodic retriever; and
an animated character downloader coupled to said advertisement details periodic retriever
and to said animated character content deliverer

40. (Original) The apparatus of claim 31, further including:

a server alert sender;
an artificial intelligence response receiver coupled to said animated character displayer
and to said animated character content deliverer.

41. (Original) The apparatus of claim 40, wherein said server alert sender includes:

a web search message sender; and
a keyword sender coupled to said web search message sender.

42. (Cancelled)

43. (Currently amended) An apparatus for managing an instant Messaging (IM) system,
including:

an animated character request receiver, for receiving a request from a recipient of an IM
for an animated character, said request including data that identifies the sender of the IM
message;

a database query generator coupled to said animated character request receiver for
generating a query;

an animated character database information receiver for querying a database with said
query and obtaining from said database an animated character associated with the sender;
and

an animated character database information forwarder coupled to said animated character
database information receiver for forwarding said animated character to said recipient.

44-49. (Cancelled)

50. (Currently amended) An apparatus for instant messaging on a computer system, including:

means for receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;
means for determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;
means for sending a request to a character server with said identification of said sender;
means for receiving from said character server an animated character associated with said sender
means for displaying an~~said~~ animated character associated with said sender; and
means for delivering said content to a user through said animated character.

51-61. (Cancelled)

62. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 50, further including:

means for allowing the ~~user~~sender to select from one or more predefined animated characters to be displayed on a recipient's computer system when said ~~user~~sender sends an IM message to said recipient.

63. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 50, further including:

means for allowing the ~~user~~sender to upload an image to be used in creating an animated character to be displayed on a recipient's computer system when said ~~user~~sender sends an IM message to said recipient.

64. (Currently amended) An apparatus for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, including:

means for receiving a request from a user for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of an IM message to said user;
means for querying a database with said identification to identify an animated character associated with the sender;
means for receiving said animated character associated with the sender from said database; and
means for forwarding ~~said information regarding~~ said animated character to said user.

65-78. (Cancelled)

79. (Currently amended) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for instant messaging on a computer system, the method including:

- receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;
- determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;
- sending a request to a character server with said identification of said sender;
- receiving from said character server an animated character associated with said sender
- displaying an animated character associated with said sender; and
- delivering said content to a user through said animated character.

80. (Currently amended) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, the method including:

- receiving a request from a user for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of an IM message to said user;
- querying a database with said identification to identify an animated character associated with the sender;
- receiving ~~information regarding~~ said animated character associated with the sender from said database; ~~and forwarding said information regarding, and~~
- forwarding said animated character to said user.